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Art Is For Everyone

by Mary Odegard

Technical Journalism Senior

THERE WAS a time when the term "artist" seemed to include only the inspired men who locked themselves in garrets to create with canvas and brushes. Today we needn't even look at one of their pictures to see the importance of art. We see it in well-designed pottery and furniture, woven draperies and jewelry. We ourselves are artists as we arrange a pretty plate of food or decorate our dorm rooms.

Through the years art has become less and less the exclusive property of a talented few. We use everyday art principles in nearly everything we do. Besides that, in the last 4 years a great change has taken place in the field of art, which, according to Prof. Marjorie Garfield, head of the Applied Art Department, amounts almost to a second Renaissance.

Everyday Art Popular

For the first time since the Industrial Revolution, people in the fine arts are swinging around to apply their talents to everyday art needs. In just the last few years we've seen more and more of this country's best artists, men like Arnold Blanche and Edward Winters, turning to stained glass windows, enameled ceramics, silk screen designing and fine jewelry. Exhibitions of their work are causing excitement in art centers all over the country.

Up to this time those interested in fine arts had been devoting their talents entirely to self expression

in painting, sculpture and architecture without concern for "speaking the people's language." The work of applying art principles to furniture, pottery and interior design they considered a job for "craftsmen," not true artists. Such work was left completely to another group of people interested in applied art. The result of this attitude is that today fine arts are taught in one school while applied arts are in another, like the University of Iowa and Iowa State College. It is as if they have no connection at all.

Arts Split Up

The interesting thing about this split between fine art and applied art, though, is that it never existed up to and during 17th century Renaissance times. The master painters and sculptors of that period designed jewelry, musical instruments, maps, glassware and other useful objects besides doing painting. Nor did they feel they were lowering their standards or being less creative by doing this work.

When the Industrial Revolution came along, all necessities of life became machine-made. With this revolution in America came power-press printing and the development of "mass art." As Elizabeth McCausland says in *Careers in the Arts*, "Printing revolutionized art." Commercial artists were in demand to illustrate books, magazines, advertising, catalogues, business cards and letterheads. Since men devoted to fine art and those doing commercial art work were now serving different purposes, they began placing different emphasis on art skills.

Commercial Art In Demand

The group of artists who worked with industry, applying art principles to everyday purposes, naturally had a ready-made market for their work. It had immediate material value to a greater range of people and enjoyed wider distribution. Because of this, people in applied art right from the start had a more secure financial future. On the other hand, persons in fine art claimed to be more artistically superior. They said that by catering to the demands of the public, applied art sacrificed its creativeness. And so the feud was on.

Everyday art at its best is exhibited at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago. The best designed articles are displayed annually in the Good Design Exhibition.





The Art Shop opened fall quarter by Delta Phi Delta, art honorary, gave art students a chance to put some of their work up for sale to other students and faculty. Members found good experience in seeing which of their articles really sold.

Gifted artists in both of the fields, however, regretted the feud and questioned the need for such a division. In many cases forms of craftsmanship called "applied" art were so closely related to painting and sculpture that the dividing lines were blurred. Some of these borderline crafts are mosaic and murals in relation to painting, modeling as contrasted to sculpture and interior decoration in relation to architecture.

But the division did exist. During the 19th and 20th centuries those in fine art kept hands off any form of everyday art. Good applied art was slow in developing in some cases, especially when mass production was just getting started.

In the last 20 years, however, there has been a great rise in respect for applied art. Home Economics has played a large part by setting high standards in relating art principles to all aspects of home life. Here at Iowa State applied art students, in Miss Garfield's words, "have their feet on the ground." They design for a purpose, yet their work is still structurally sound and they emphasize creativeness.

Recognize Usefulness

The applied arts have shown the way to usefulness, and today the fine arts are again moving in that direction. Recognition of this first began in 1932 when the New York Museum of Modern Art opened its Machine Art Exhibition. There they exhibited the beauty of technologically produced objects. Other institutes like the Minneapolis Walker Art Center have followed its example by adding everyday art galleries.

And how does all this affect the fine arts? In Miss Garfield's opinion there will always be sculpture and painting; however, the future trend seems to be that artists will probably do both fine and applied art work.

That copper jewelry or pottery you've been admiring may well be the work of the modern Michelangelo.

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